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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000180

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SUBJECT: GITMO DETAINEES IN ALBANIA POSE LIMITED THREAT

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Stephen Cristina, for reasons 1.
4 (B) & (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The resettlement of Guantanamo detainees in Albania has proven to be a success, even though significant challenges remain. Nearly three years after their arrival in Albania, seven former detainees remain in Albania, with one having received asylum in Sweden. Of the seven, all have learned Albanian and most are currently working. The group as a whole has faced no overt discrimination, despite the fact that Albania is an overwhelmingly homogenous society with no real immigrant or refugee communities. The manner in which the funds for detainee resettlement were transferred to the GOA and the GOA inability to program uses for these funds which meet USG accounting standards were challenges to effective resettlement. The GOA generally considers the resettlement a success and does not judge the refugees to be a security threat. Officials closely tied to the detainees describe them as healthy, psychologically normal and continuing to integrate into Albanian society. However, without considerable USG monetary support and guidance, it is almost certain that the resettlement of the detainees would have been much more difficult for both the GOA and the detainees themselves. The true test of GOA willingness and ability to continue supporting the detainees' transition will come in October of 2009, when USG funds provided for resettlement to the GOA will be exhausted. End summary.

ALBANIA AS A RESETTLEMENT OPTION

12. (C) While Albania's weak infrastructure and limited resources made resettlement of detainees a challenge, the GOA's willingness to take a very hands-on approach toward resettlement and the very pro-American stance of the populace aided resettlement substantially. The inability of the GOA to provide residency permits to detainees, family members, the lack of cultural connections, the severe resource constraints impacting the ability of the Albanian security services to effectively monitor detainees, and the limited economic prospects in Albania should be considered as US officials weigh future resettlement options.

GOA EXPERIENCE

13. (SBU) In March 5 and 6 meeting with poloffs, Albanian officials reported that it has not faced any problems from detainee resettlement. The Ministry of Justice has not received any complaints about detainees breaking the law or engaging in illegal behavior, and detainees have not sought damages against the GOA. While detainees have contacted

officials for assistance, with the Minister of Justice even noting that he had received text messages from one of the detainees, there have been no formal complaints about the detainees' treatment in Albania. After the GOA accepted the detainees the only negative reaction received was through diplomatic channels from the Ambassador to the Republic of China, who expressed his country's disapproval of the GOA's agreement to host the detainees.

DETAINEES' LEGAL STATUS

14. (SBU) Minister of Interior Nishani told poloffs on March 5 that detainees were processed through normal asylum procedures when they arrived in Tirana. On the day of their arrival, they filed asylum applications which went to a five-member committee that made a determination on their status. Ministry of Justice Officials in a later meeting explained that the detainees were given the status as foreigners under Albanian law for legal proceedings. For all other proceedings they were given refugee status. They enjoy all rights of Albanian citizens except the right to vote. They cannot become naturalized citizens unless one of their parents is Albanian. Furthermore, they were given refugee documentation and were sent to a refugee center, just outside the city borders of Tirana.

LIFE AT THE REFUGEE CENTER

15. (SBU) Director of Citizenship and Refugees Drita Avdyli escorted poloffs on a March 6 tour of the refugee center where the detainees resided after they arrived. At the refugee center, the detainees were given personal rooms, shared bathrooms, access to the Internet, books, pre-paid phone cards, and three meals a day at the communal kitchen.

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They received the free services of a psychiatrist, a doctor, a lawyer, and an Albanian language teacher. The detainees were active in the community. All the detainees were given access to the center's psychiatrist, who described the detainees as normal and in very good mental health. Avdyli, however, noted that the Uzbekistani detainee suffered from mental health problems. She described these problems as minor, adding that he was more difficult and demanding than other detainees, but she did not have great problems in dealing with him. At the end of their approximate six-month stay at the refugee center they were given financial assistance to pay for an apartment and received 300 USD a month, equal to a mid-level GOA official's salary. Their six-month stay was extended under Albanian Legislation to two years, which ends October 2009.

LIFE IN TIRANA) OUTSIDE THE REFUGEE CENTER

16. (SBU) The seven detainees have all had training classes and are moving on with their lives. They speak Albanian, they are free to practice their choice of religion and live life among Albanian citizens without discrimination. They are not heavily monitored by the GOA. Three Chinese Uighur detainees are currently trying to get funding to open up a Hallal pizza restaurant. All have had cooking classes and two are working at restaurants in Tirana. The fourth Uighur is working on a project to increase the city's green spaces. The Egyptian has taken classes at a local Madrasa, the Algerian is working at a medical clinic, and the Uzbek is taking classes at a local university. The biggest obstacle to resettlement is family resettlement. The Egyptian's girlfriend recently arrived on a tourist visa, and one of the Uighurs has an Albanian girlfriend, but otherwise the detainees have been unable to reunite with their families.

17. (C) Comment: Considering its limited resources (Albania remains the second-poorest country in Europe) and lack of government experience and capacity with refugee resettlement, the GOA has done a reasonably good job in managing the difficult resettlement of the former detainees. However,

without considerable USG monetary support and guidance, it is almost certain that the resettlement of the detainees would have been much more difficult for both the GOA and the detainees themselves. The true test of GOA willingness and ability to continue supporting the detainees' transition will come in October of 2009, when USG funds provided to the GOA for resettlement will be exhausted.

WITHERS